

VZCZCXRO3588
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #2347/01 3370707
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 020707Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4588
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0359
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002347

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2018
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES EFCC, RIBADU, BIT &
AMISOM WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR YAKUBU

REF: A. ABUJA 2325
[1](#)B. STATE 125135

Classified By: Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders for Reasons 1.4 (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On November 26, 2008 the Ambassador met with Tanimu Yakubu, the Chief Economic Advisor and close personal confidant to President Yar'Adua, to discuss the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and former EFCC Chair Ribadu. She also covered the lack of progress and roadblocks to increasing U.S./Nigeria trade and investment and other issues (reftel A). Yakubu agreed to restart the Framework for Partnership working groups, plus bilateral investment treaty (BIT) and Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meetings in late January 2009, including sending a team to Washington. Yakubu contended the USG's focus on Ribadu and the EFCC had given him the impression that the USG was downgrading Nigeria and that our bilateral relationship was focused only on these issues. The Ambassador pushed back hard, outlining all the programs, assistance, etc., that we are doing with Nigeria, underscoring the importance of beginning in earnest the Framework discussions. She emphasized, however, that the GON was making huge public relations and political mistakes as regards Ribadu. Yakubu noted Yar'Adua was embarrassed by how the security forces were treating the former EFCC Chair, has asked for the treatment to stop, and personally intervened to have Ribadu's Nigerian Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) diploma issued. Ambassador's meeting with the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs on November 30 on the same issue will be reported septel. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) During the November 26 meeting, the Ambassador provided Presidential Special Advisor Yakubu with a non-paper that outlined major issues preventing increased U.S. investment and trade with Nigeria. The non-paper noted plans for BIT discussion, and our challenges with the remaining import bans, sanctity of contracts issues, problems with buying and titling property, and intellectual property rights violations. Yakubu agreed to respond to the USG issues within the Framework for Partnership working groups with plans to meet in late January 2009.

[1](#)3. (C) Yakubu said his impression is that the U.S. is narrowing its focus with Nigeria to side issues, such as Ribadu and the EFCC. He questioned whether the U.S. still considered Nigeria a strategic partner. Yakubu compared the amount of USG assistance to Iraq and Afghanistan with what Nigeria received as a signal of the USG's lost interest in Nigeria. Yakubu complained that the USG was backing away from previous promises to provide technical assistance and capacity building, particularly on mortgage issues, health,

education and on bringing the Peace Corps back.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador responded with a hard line back saying that if the Special Advisor has this impression he was mistaken. First, she said the front lines of the War on Terrorism must be the USG's main priority and we count on partners like Nigeria to be with us in this fight. Secondly, clearly we believe that the EFCC, Ribadu and the anti-corruption efforts are front burner issues for the USG here because we want Nigeria's democracy to evolve, which it cannot do if these issues do not improve or are not handled better. The Ambassador accepted Yakubu's explanation that the Villa had no policy or intention to harm the former EFCC Chairman, but that he had to be aware, as she was, that there are others in the GON who have other views. The Ambassador underscored that the USG, and the international community writ large, would certainly be very disappointed if anything were to happen to the former EFCC Chairman, even if was not President Yar'Adua's policy to do so.

¶5. (C) On USG program issues, the Ambassador said the U.S. still views Nigeria as a strategic partner and she reviewed the large number of programs/projects the USG is engaged in Nigeria with PEPFAR being the largest. She noted that Nigeria was the largest sub-Saharan recipient of USG assistance and that the U.S. has not wavered from its commitment to working with Nigeria. In fact, she related that the USG would like to see Nigeria do more on the continent as a regional leader in addition to deepening economic relations with us by agreeing to a BIT. (Note: Ambassador also gave and went over AMISOM demarche points,

ABUJA 00002347 002 OF 002

reftel B, with Yakubu. End Note)

¶6. (C) Comment: It is worrisome that someone as close to Yar'Adua as Yakubu is, and who is also U.S. educated, sees the bilateral relationship this way. Yakubu has a lot of influence on President Yar'Adua and could be espousing these views to him. The USG has a broad array of programs and projects with Nigeria, yet accomplishments and cooperation in those areas are being overshadowed in the GON's mind by the EFCC and Ribadu issues. We need to continue our vigilance on the EFCC and corruption issues, but also need to ensure that our policies and progress do not get sidelined by GON policy makers with similar views to Yakubu's. End Comment.
Sanders